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Slovak Nationalism Model or Mirage?

Caroline Barker

In the face of an increasing number of bloody dissolutions of states around the world, the “velvet divorce” between Czechs and Slovaks has often been cited as evidence that such excesses can be avoided. This article, written before the October 1998 elections that saw the end of the government of Vladimír Mečiar, seeks to explain that the peaceful split of these two nations is not an instance that can be replicated elsewhere but grows from the unique nature of Slovak nationalism. The article traces the historical evolution of Slovak nationalism and challenges the view that it has ever been a dominant sentiment in Slovak society. The author argues that autonomy and democratic freedoms long appeared to be mutually exclusive in the Slovak experience and that it was the typical Slovak characteristics of resignation and obedience to authority that kept them from concerted rebellion. These same facets lay behind the quiet nature of the split with the Czechs in January 1993, which was never advocated by the majority of the population.

Frustration of national hopes is one of the basic features of Slovak history, and has done much to determine the Slovak “national character,” if one can speak of such a thing.

— Eugen Steiner
The Slovak Dilemma

Silence reigns. Somehow conversation has stalled, even though there are fourteen people in the room. They are all too lazy to speak and to think. They are content in their forgetting — in their indolent stagnation. Not even the child’s screaming troubles them. They’re content even if it screams — they’re content regardless.

— Božena Slančíková-Timravá
“Ďapakovci,” *Ďapakovci a Iné Poviedky*

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the “new world order” that was initially hailed with confident anticipation fast revealed itself as an illusion. New conflicts arose, ethnic groups launched new or reinvigorated struggles for independence, and a number of states that had long embraced different ethnic groups disintegrated. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the new states rising from the ashes of the Soviet Union and its Communist satellites. Former Yugoslavia was soon to imprint itself on the consciousness of publics around the world as the prime example of these “new” and disconcerting phenomena. Former Czechoslovakia became another oft-quoted case, an instance of how two ethnic groups could part ways peacefully. This, it appeared, was the model to be preached to others.

My aim here is to explain why the case of Czechoslovakia is a false light in the dark-

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ness, an example that is all too eagerly cited to prove the possibility for easy, peaceful solutions to the explosive potential of ethnic nationalism. This oversimplistic analysis is the result of a number of presumptions made about the nature of Slovak national sentiment. I seek to challenge some of these presumptions, arguing that the Slovak case requires a close examination of the Slovak experience of history, particularly since the mid-nineteenth century, and an understanding that this has left the Slovaks with a very ambiguous, even ambivalent, understanding of themselves as a nation. I suggest that this has both emerged from and reinforced certain national characteristics that might be termed resignation, apathy, provincialism, or disillusionment.¹

The Origins of Slovak Nationalism: Theories and Interpretations

In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Anthony Smith distinguishes between theorists who see nationalism as a primordial phenomenon, according to which “national ties and sentiments are the ‘stuff of history,’” and those who take a modernist approach, seeing the nation as “a product of strictly modern developments like capitalism, bureaucracy, and secular utilitarianism.”² Whatever may be the case with other ethnic groups, it is all but impossible to argue the primordialist line in the case of the Slovaks. This is not to say that such attempts have not been made.

One Slovak historian who seeks to build a picture of the long history of Slovak national sentiment is Joseph Mikus.³ Although he lays stress on the events of 1848 and later, these are conveyed in terms of awakening the political consciousness of a national identity that dates back even as far as the Great Moravian Empire of the ninth century. Mikus tries to anchor Slovak identity deep within an innate Slovak mentality. He defines this most strongly in contrast to the Czechs to illustrate the fallacy of any argument that the two peoples are indistinct. In a remarkable statement that reveals his own nationalist feelings and motivations for this primordialist argument, Mikus writes,

The Czechs share with the Germans a certain lack of perception of political reality and sociability. A little factual detail, not without significance, which puts these two peoples on the same footing, is that they are both beer drinkers. In contrast to the Czechs, who are a psychologically “Nordic” nation, the Slovaks, facing, so to speak, towards the Danube plain, are “gens du midi” or southerners: they drink wine.⁴

Mikus contends that the Slovaks’ “centuries-old history proves eloquently that they also have a natural ambition for such a degree of political independence and statehood as the general political conditions prevailing in the Central European area allow them to achieve.”⁵ The truth of this statement lies more in the passivity that its latter half implies than in the historical ambition of its opening words, as I seek to show.

Stanislav Kirschbaum, another Slovak historian, takes a more moderate approach. He tends toward a position between modernism and primordialism. Not unlike Mikus, Kirschbaum believes that the cohesiveness of the Slovak nation owes its historical roots to the Great Moravian Empire, but only became an active force in the nineteenth century with the rise of the Enlightenment notion of “natural rights” to self-determination. He contrasts these natural rights that the Slovaks might claim with the perceived “historic rights” to autonomy of many other Central European peoples at the time — rights which consisted in “the possession of a state at one time or another in the area’s history, preferably in fairly recent times.”⁶ However, he also stresses the effects of economic

development and industrialization after the Second World War in uniting and mobilizing the Slovak people as a cohesive group.

Miroslav Kusý takes a distinctly modernist approach, reflecting Ernest Gellner's emphasis on the role of economic development in creating ethnic cohesiveness and generating ethnic mobilization. Kusý questions why the Slovak people galvanized in opposition to their subordination within Czechoslovakia only in the late 1960s, at a time when the repression was alleviating, not strengthening. He concludes that the key factors at play were the increased rate of industrialization in Slovakia and the resulting urbanization of the population as a whole. "Just as the process of homogenization of the Slovaks into a modern nation took place on these foundations, so too did the growth of their national consciousness. Precisely at this time, Slovaks as a truly mass, nationwide group became aware of themselves as a modern nation."⁷

So where does the truth lie? Have the Slovak people long formed a consciously aware nation with its "own language, the sense of belonging to the same family, [its] own historical space, and a common spirit which has formed its members both morally and intellectually?"⁸ Is it a phenomenon of the last two centuries, recently accentuated by industrialization, but with recognizable origins in more distant history? Or is real nationalism — taking the requirement of Liah Greenfeld and others that it be a truly mass movement to qualify as such — only perceptible since the Second World War? To these questions I add one further set. Just how strong has Slovak nationalist sentiment been at *any* time? Are the Slovaks a nation in Walker Connor's definition of "nation" as a group that is itself aware of its uniqueness? Or do they fall closer to Connor's definition of an ethnic group, or prenational group, characterized by a "rather low level of ethnic solidarity which a segment of the ethnic element feels when confronted with a foreign element, [a sentiment which] need not be very important politically and comes closer to xenophobia than to nationalism?"⁹

In seeking answers to these questions, I first examine those key events in Slovak history between 1800 and 1989 that are commonly cited by historians of the Slovak nation. These are the attempted revolution under the Hungarians in 1848; the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918; the creation of an independent Slovakia under Nazi Germany in 1938; the Slovak National Uprising in 1944; the reconstitution of Czechoslovakia in 1945 followed by the Communist takeover in 1948; and the Prague Spring of 1968.

The Historical Prism: Reflection or Distortion?

Both Walker Connor and Benedict Anderson stress the power of the historical myth in creating and galvanizing national sentiment — the stories of historical homogeneity, achievement, survival, and greatness, which, whether true or not, can create the mass sense of belonging that underlies a nation. Kusý notes in an essay, "The Moral Sense of Historic Truth," that "every mass political movement, every regime, every national or state ideology has an existential interest in history: it struggles for historical justification, wants to make the history of its nation its own, to present itself as its sole lawful inheritor and perpetuator." He concludes, "In such a case, the issue at stake is far from being the scientific resolution of a technical historical question, or solid proof of an historical truth; it is the ideological consciousness of the nation, expressed in its historical self-reflection."¹⁰

In reviewing the events in Slovak history enumerated above, it is necessary to exam-

ine the various ways in which Slovak regimes and the Slovak people have interpreted them. These differing interpretations are well reflected in the analyses of Joseph Mikus, Stanislav Kirschbaum, Eugen Steiner, and Miroslav Kusý, on which I draw. It is only through understanding the complex intertwining of contradictory experiences and the ambiguous national value of the various historical models on offer that one can appreciate the sentiments that directed the course of those events and the ambivalences that they engender in retrospect.

1848: Muted Revolution

In 1848 a series of popular uprisings across Europe was driven by demands for varying degrees of national autonomy and democratic liberalization. Slovakia had been under the yoke of the Hungarian Empire since the tenth century, the nobility were Hungarian, and there was essentially no Slovak political class. Kirschbaum writes,

In the 800 years or so of coexistence between the Slovaks and Magyars, their relationship, at least until 1790, had not been fundamentally confrontational . . . While [the Slovaks] accepted the medieval order and identified with the Hungarian state — a fact that, until the nineteenth century, no Slovak writer ever questioned — the Magyar nobility in Slovakia not only learned to speak Slovak but also identified with the Slovak core, encouraged its culture, and often defended its interests.¹¹

This all changed with the Hungarian nineteenth-century policy of assimilating its minorities, inter alia through limiting the use of their languages in public life and focusing education on the Hungarian history and culture. This policy of active assimilation was known as Magyarization. Hence, in the 1840s, when the Hungarians rose against their oppressors, the Hapsburg Austrians, a small group of Slovak nationalists in turn rose against the Hungarians. Yet the redirection of Slovak loyalties was confused. Initially the Slovak leaders adopted a pan-Slavic policy in solidarity with the Czechs, Serbs, and Croats, which culminated in a Slav Congress in June 1848 in Prague. But when the Czechs pressed for some kind of political union with the Slovaks, the latter rejected the idea, preferring the prospect of direct rule from Austria. Toward the end of 1848 this group allied with the Austrians against the Hungarians. Yet throughout this period some Slovak peasants fought with the Hungarian, rather than the Slovak or Austrian, forces.

Kirschbaum estimates that in the most concerted Slovak operation of the period, in September 1848, the volunteer force numbered just 600 men, including students of other nationalities.¹² Kusý cites an estimate of only 300 volunteers, of whom no more than 50 were Slovaks. In his words, “This spark did not yet ignite the nation . . . a few fires of discontent on Slovak soil, a little tactical talk and basically unsuccessful negotiation with Vienna — that was all that was done and achieved.”¹³

Certainly Kirschbaum’s claim that the Slovaks were shown through these events to be “a nation that would fight for its survival” seems vastly exaggerated.¹⁴ Any nationalist motivations behind the events of 1848–1849 were espoused only by a tiny elite. As Kirschbaum admits, once feudalism was abolished by the Hungarians (following their defeat by Austria and Russia and internal reorganization), even those few Slovak peasants who *had* been caught up in the spirit of revolution quickly lost interest “and watched with indifference the victory of absolutism.”¹⁵ At most, Slovak engagement, beyond a few intellectuals, was a class or social phenomenon; in no way was it a national endeavor.

1918: Czechoslovakia: Slovak Goal or Foreign Imposition?

The First World War marked the occasion on which the Czech and Slovak diasporas first took a hand in determining the fate of their fatherlands. There had been steady and large-scale emigration from Slovakia to Canada and the United States since the 1870s, numbering some 30,000 per year, a third of whom are estimated to have subsequently returned. In October 1915, Czech and Slovak émigré organizations formulated the Cleveland Agreement, which proposed the creation of a federal state comprising the two nations. Under this arrangement, both Czechs and Slovaks would have considerable autonomy and territorial independence.

This goal of federation did find support only among the diaspora. The three main Slovak leaders at the time, Andrej Hlinka, Milan Hodža, and Milan Štefaník, were all pressing for a similar arrangement. Hodža and Hlinka were both signatories of the Martin Declaration of October 1918, in which cultural and political leaders of Slovakia signed up to the end of Slovakia's participation in the Hungarian Empire and the beginning of union with the Czech lands. Štefaník also worked closely with the Czech federalists, Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, in finding support for this plan in the West. Although Štefaník and others insisted on an equal role of Slovaks in the new state, requiring that the movement's official organization in Paris change its name from the Czech National Council to the Czecho-Slovak National Council, they did not entertain the idea of Slovak independence. It was Štefaník himself who went to persuade the Slovak League of America to accept the federalist orientation. These efforts led, in May 1918, to the signing of the Pittsburgh Pact, which in fact promised a slightly lesser degree of linguistic and administrative autonomy to the Slovaks than its precursor in Cleveland.

Regardless of these agreements, when the federation became a reality at the end of the Great War, it was essentially imposed by the Allies "with the agreement of a handful of Slovak intellectuals."¹⁶ There was no plebiscite or apparent adoption of the arrangement by the Slovak people. Kusý points out that the one goal of the nationalists since 1848 had been to gain independence from the Hungarians, a negative definition of the ethnic nation based on a rejection of Hungarian hegemony. Instead of forming a positive definition of the ethnic unit as an independent, national state, such as other peoples in the region were seeking and achieving, "the Slovaks got [and appeared to accept] a substitute . . . the First Republic."¹⁷ This republic proved a disappointment even to some of its Slovak architects, as the promises of national equality made to the Slovaks were soon forgotten.

With the birth of the First Republic, the Slovaks achieved participation in a democratic state for the first time, yet by comparison with other groups in the region, they appeared to do so at the cost of their national autonomy. Štefaník became a national hero and remains a part of the history of Slovak consciousness to this day, an irony that is lost on neither Kusý nor Kirschbaum. Kusý writes, "Somewhere here is hidden the first national trauma, symbolized in the legend of Štefaník. This became an integral element of the Slovak national consciousness."¹⁸

1939–1944: Autonomy and Democracy: Ne'er the Twain Shall Meet?

The perceived loss of national autonomy in the formation of the First Republic was, for those elites who concerned themselves with it, a loss relative to the hopes and promises cultivated during the First World War and to the experience of neighboring nations in its aftermath. Relative to the Slovak experience under the Hungarians, Slovakia had indeed

gained some limited rights. However, the Second World War was to take the inverse relationship between democracy and autonomy a step further in the Slovak experience of history. It is perhaps the most controversial episode in Slovak history and the one open to the most varied and conflicting interpretations.

Slovakia became a vassal state under Hitler's Germany following an agreement between the Third Reich and the Slovak People's Party in 1938 and a vote in the Slovak Provincial Assembly on March 14, 1939. The new state was headed by President Jozef Tiso, an extreme right-wing cleric, with Vojtech Tuka as his prime minister. Tuka appears to have been, by all accounts, the more hard-line of the two, and Kirschbaum attempts to paint Tiso as a moderate who recognized that "the way to ensure survival was to have a regime run by fascist parties or by political leaders not unaware of the interests of Berlin."¹⁹

Kirschbaum acknowledges the tragedy of the deportation of some 70,000 Jews to concentration camps, but lays the blame for anti-Semitic policies on Tuka, stating that "Tiso was personally opposed to such measures but as head of state his position was complex, reflecting political pressures, and he used his office to oppose them only when it was clear what the consequences of the German Final Solution were."²⁰ Joseph Mikus, who also has personal links to the wartime regime, is even more dismissive of this episode. He writes, "During the war, the Slovak Republic was, unfortunately, not entirely successful in protecting the human rights of some of its individuals or of some groups of its citizens; but this was the result of severe external pressures, of forces majeures rather than any intentional policy." Of Tiso he writes, "The acumen with which he spoke as President of Slovakia with Hitler and handled delicate questions of Slovak-German relations with German diplomats and generals puts him above the Western statesmen who had capitulated before 'the Fuehrer' in Munich."²¹ This view, for all that it seems rather remarkable, represents a continuing interpretation among a section of Slovak society today. The Slovak National Party, in the present coalition government of Vladimír Mečiar, backed the recent publication of a new history book for schools that gives a favorable view of Tiso's regime and Slovakia's wartime state. Nationalists have made other attempts, not all successful, to reinstate Tiso as a hero of the nation, such as renaming streets and erecting memorials.

Miroslav Kusý offers a different view from that of Mikus:

In the final analysis, the Slovak State played a rather negative role in the formation of the national consciousness of Slovaks. Due to its dual nature (both its national and vassal status) it was probably incapable of finding a place in the hearts of the whole nation, since the fulfillment of one function suppressed and excluded the fulfillment of the other . . . In many respects, the state therefore substituted any truly valuable "service to the nation" with a nationalistic demagogy, and even this was restricted by its vassal status (part of which required, after all, the recognition of the inferiority of its own people to the Germans). The price for the Slovak alternative to a Protectorate was probably, even in the [Slovak] national consciousness, too high.²²

Added to these various interpretations of the independent state is further confusion over how to view the Slovak National Uprising of 1944. The advent of independence in 1939 had appeared to arouse little enthusiasm among the Slovak masses at the time. Kirschbaum cites a report by Peter Pares, the British consul-general to Slovakia at the time, who wrote,

The reception given to the declaration [of independence] on Tuesday [March 14] by the people of Bratislava was lukewarm indeed. There were no manifestations of joy and the townsfolk went about their normal business as if nothing had happened . . . A week after the declaration . . . the inhabitants of Bratislava are still unable to show great enthusiasm for the present state of affairs. The general impression is one of apathy or pessimism.²³

The French consul-general reported that while the university youth appeared to be regretting the advent of the new totalitarian regime, "the powerless and resigned rural mass [gave] itself up to its fate."²⁴

The contrast between this reaction to independence and the extent of popular involvement in the National Uprising is striking. Eugen Steiner captures the mood of the uprising, albeit in a somewhat exaggerated account. "It was a real 'people's movement.' Slovak partisans, soldiers, workers, peasants, and intellectuals, wherever they had the chance, went into action virtually without their new national leaders. The latter joined the people only after they had seen what was happening and realized they could not stop the course of events."²⁵

According to Steiner, although the formal fighting was limited to a couple of divisions of partisans, usually recruited from army deserters, they had the support of a majority of the Slovak population. (In reality, the uprising was limited almost entirely to Central Slovakia.) Despite the fact that the rebellion was put down by the Germans over the course of two months, Steiner identifies it as the Slovaks' finest hour:

Politically and morally, the Uprising showed that the Slovaks were prepared to bring the highest sacrifice in order to gain national freedom. It was a great moment in the troubled history of the nation. However much the Slovaks had been blamed for the events of 1848 when they turned against the Hungarian anti-Hapsburg revolution, or for 1938 when their leaders competed with their Czech counterparts for Hitler's favors, whatever Czech democrats and liberals have thought of them, there can be no doubt that the Slovaks had shown their real mettle.²⁶

This is a far cry from Kirschbaum's assessment of the uprising. He notes that the leaders of the uprising wished to reconstitute the Czecho-Slovak state on federal lines, and concludes that "since these groups were dedicated to the destruction of the Slovak Republic and they enjoyed Allied support, their activities had a direct bearing on the future of the Slovak people. In linking up with these groups, the Slovaks in opposition to Bratislava were mortgaging the life of the nation."²⁷

Kirschbaum seems to merge the terms "nation" and "state" in this observation. Walker Connor has noted the disservice done to the study of nationalism by such confusions. "This tendency is perplexing because at one level of consciousness most scholars are clearly well aware of the vital distinctions between the two concepts."²⁸ In his accounts leading up to the formation of the Slovak wartime state, Kirschbaum does indeed observe the crucial distinction between the Slovak nation and a Slovak state. It is significant that once such a state is formed — in his view as an overwhelmingly positive phenomenon — the distinction blurs.

Miroslav Kusý offers the most valuable insight into the complicated ramifications of the wartime experience for the Slovak psyche: what he terms the "collision between the Slovak State and the Slovak National Uprising." He argues that, by default, the Slovak National Uprising was "not just an uprising against Tiso's regime, against his vassal ties to the German Reich, but [was] also an uprising against the national sovereignty itself

of the Slovak people, against the idea of Slovak statehood as realized in the independent Slovak State.” He notes the trap of confusing the notion of Slovak statehood with the particular form it took under Tiso. Since the “idea of Slovak national statehood and the regime of the Slovak State are not one and the same, and one does not represent the other, each enters into the historical national consciousness [of Slovaks] with a different, opposing evaluation.”²⁹

Kusý seeks to resolve this internal contradiction by reassessing the labels attached to the events. He suggests that the National Uprising is wrongly termed as such. It was an uprising by one part of the nation (in Central Slovakia) against its government, at a time when there were no German troops in Slovakia beyond a small number involved in transportation. The uprising was driven by resentment of the dictatorial regime of Tiso, and was thus, at best, a kind of democratic revolution or social uprising. (Indeed, as Kirschbaum remarks, the thousands involved in the uprising were driven by varying motivations ranging from political conviction, anti-German feeling, and opportunism to fear.) “In short: the Slovak State was indeed national, but it wasn’t democratic; the Slovak National Uprising was indeed democratic, but it wasn’t national.”³⁰ Although Kusý avoids the error of confusing the Slovak nation with the Slovak state, he nevertheless concludes — more in line with Kirschbaum than with his own previous statements — that the Czechoslovak federalist aims of the uprising’s leaders made it an uprising against the *concept* of Slovak statehood as much as against Tiso’s regime. The partisans rebelled “not only against an undemocratic period and fascist manifestation in this Slovak State, but also against its very status as national.”³¹

The significance of the views of these two commentators, who have very different perspectives and political backgrounds, is in the wide variation in the interpretations they offer of the wartime experience. These conflicting viewpoints, which both find their constituencies, have in turn engendered severe problems for the Slovaks’ view of themselves as a nation, as an independent state, and as the specific state that formed under Tiso. This lack of clarity continues today in the minds of many Slovaks and is used by politicians in the Mečiar government to suggest that anyone who criticizes the government is, by definition, criticizing the motherland, independent Slovakia, and is therefore a bad Slovak. In this view, membership in the Slovak nation is equated both with membership in the Slovak state and, furthermore, with adherence to its present government.

1945: Paying the Price

Whether one adopts Mikus’s view that “90 per cent of the population loyally adhered to the idea of the Slovak State” during the war, or the view that the uprising of 1944 was the truest manifestation of national sentiment, the reality is that federation was ultimately imposed on the Slovaks in 1945, rather than chosen by them. Beneš had managed to persuade the Allies that his London-based government-in-exile represented both the Czech and Slovak nations. Indeed, the Slovak elite appeared split on this issue, some advocating continued independence, and others, particularly those behind the uprising, strongly in favor of federation. What is certain is that even those who favored federation wished for equality for the Slovak people within a joint state. They believed that they had secured at least this much through the Košice Program, agreed with Beneš and others in March of 1945.³²

Nevertheless, as with the interwar union between Czechs and Slovaks, their second union was dictated by the Western powers. The policy of the (Henry) Stimson Doctrine,

which advocated nonrecognition of states that had emerged from external aggression or a violation of international law, left Slovakia with a weak case for continued independence. Furthermore, since the inclination of the Allies was to reconstitute Czechoslovakia, as desired by Beneš et al., any recognition of the interim sovereignty of Slovakia would have made this very difficult. Given that the Slovak wartime government had not capitulated to the Allies, the new federal state would have looked too much like a Czech occupation of Slovakia.

The lack of any choice exercised by the Slovak nation in forming the new state in 1945, and the denial of their wish for a federal arrangement, meant that the Slovaks did not embrace the new state in the emotional way that the Czechs did. Nor did they feel responsible for its subsequent political direction. Over the course of the next three years, the Communist Party grew far more in popularity in the Czech lands than in Slovakia. Unlike in the Czech lands, the Communist and Socialist parties in Slovakia did not have majority support among the people. In the elections of May 1946, the Czechoslovak Communist Party won 40.17 percent of the vote in the Czech lands, the National Socialists were next with 23.6 percent, while the Czech Populist Party gained 20.24 percent and the Social Democrats just 15.58 percent. In Slovakia, by contrast, the Democratic Party obtained 62 percent and the Slovak Communist Party just 30.37 percent.³³ Hence, when the Communist Party took over Czechoslovakia in 1948, politically-conscious Slovaks immediately perceived it as an affront to their national democratic rights. They saw the Communist revolution as a Czech phenomenon and, according to Kusý, felt less personal responsibility for the disillusionment and disappointment that came, with time, to Czechs and Slovaks alike.

1968: Federation or Democratization: The Old Dilemma

If the Slovaks blamed the Czechs for the start of Communist rule in 1948, the Czechs in turn blamed the Slovaks for the failure to attenuate its grip in 1968. Mikus's attempt to convey the Prague Spring as a period of Slovak leadership and Czech failure lacks credibility. For all that it was a Slovak, Alexander Dubček, who led the Prague government through the liberalization, he was one of the many Slovak leaders and intelligentsia who strongly supported the joint Czechoslovak state. Mikus asserts,

This effort of Dubček to bring closer to the masses might have continued had not the Czech intellectuals tried to outdo him in his liberalization policies. While the more realistic Slovak Communists were insisting on the federalization of the State, the Union of Czech Writers, encouraged by Dubček's initial success, envisioned . . . a complete democratization of public life.³⁴

The reality of 1968, as Kirschbaum points out, was that "the importance of federalization for the Slovaks did not mean that they ignored or opposed the democratization process. Slovakia indulged in all of its manifestations."³⁵ Steiner and Kusý capture the way in which the Slovaks' ambiguous historical experience of autonomy and democracy led to the choices their leaders made in 1968. Steiner states, "Most Czechs thought that federation was really all that the Slovaks cared about, which, of course, was not the case. It was only one of their demands, made more urgent by the fact that in the past they had so often been cheated of their rights."³⁶ In the final denouement of the Prague Spring, the Soviet tanks rolled into Prague as a result of alarm in Moscow at the extent of liberalization. This opened the era of normalization with the return of hard-line communism, but also brought to fruition the federalization demands of Slovakia. As Kusý observes:

The paradox and tragedy of August 1968 lie in the fact that federalization was brought to the Slovaks by Soviet tanks, that they got it as a “gift” at the expense of democratic socialism with a human face. History repeats itself for us very prettily: if events the first time round (in 1848) proceeded as a tragedy, the second time round (the “independent” Slovak State) they took on the form of a tragicomedy, and the third time round [the Prague Spring is] a pure farce.³⁷

The Czech interpretation of the events of 1968 is one of betrayal by the Slovaks, whom they saw as subordinating the aim of democratic liberalization to their nationalist goal of federalization. From a Slovak perspective it can look rather different. While liberalization was the sole issue at stake for the Czechs, national rights were an important goal for an increasing number of Slovaks. The relationship between these two aims, however, was confused. Under the First Republic, the Slovaks had democracy but little national autonomy and no equality; during the war years they had complete autonomy but had lost democracy; the uprising of 1944 was a call for democratic reform which, while it necessarily spelled the end of national independence did not extinguish the hope for some national autonomy; but this hope was again denied by the politicians in Prague after 1945. Democracy did not seem to have brought the Slovaks the political rights they sought, any more than had their experience of independence under Tiso’s puppet regime. So long as democracy and autonomy seemed to be mutually exclusive alternatives, the former was not an obvious priority in a comparison between the two.

Indeed, the achievement in 1969 of greater autonomy within the Czechoslovak state appeared to bear dividends for the Slovaks. The 1970s were a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization, with the Slovak economy rising to challenge that of the Czechs, although the extent to which its benefits were felt in Slovak pockets is questionable. The Slovak masses appeared content with these gains for the time being, or at least not prepared to fight for anything more. “Slovaks as a nation were at that time still intensely absorbed in themselves, and their cultural aspirations still focused on the development of ‘national culture,’ in which the main emphasis lies on the epithet and not on the noun.”³⁸ I return below to the question of Slovak acquiescence after 1969.

Kusý traces a similar trait of self-absorption through the 1980s, observable in a continuing lack of concern among the population for civic or democratic, as against national, rights. Little wonder then that the real unraveling of the Communist regime in 1989 took place in Prague with the participation of only a few Slovaks. The demonstrations and celebrations in Slovakia were genuine, but mostly led by students and intelligentsia and largely a reactive phenomenon.

Nationalism, Panslavism, or Provincialism?

I have referred in this review of the historical experience and memory of Slovaks to the distinction between movements limited to elites and those espoused by the masses. This is a crucial differentiation in considering whether a movement is truly national — of the nation — or whether it represents the nationalist feelings of a small and isolated group. Walker Connor praises Rupert Emerson’s definition of “nation” as “the largest community which, when the chips are down, effectively commands men’s loyalty, overriding the claims both of lesser communities within it and those which cut across it or potentially enfold it within a still greater society.”³⁹ To what extent was the mass of the Slovak nation caught up in these defining events in their history? When did any sense of collective national identity move beyond the realms of culture and language and reach

the level of political engagement? Were other group orientations dominant over the national one?

I have touched on these questions in reviewing the varying historical views of the role of Slovaks in the events of 1848, 1939, 1944, and 1968. Two group orientations appear to have been at play throughout these developments: panslavism of one degree or another among a large proportion of the elites, and particularly the intelligentsia, and provincialism, underlain by an attitude of resignation, among the mass of the population. In other words, Slovak leaders have tended to look to a unit of identification beyond that of the Slovak nation — most commonly, this century, to Czechoslovakia — while the Slovak masses have identified primarily with their local region or town — and at most with their social class — while showing limited interest in events in the wider Slovak territory.

The main political leaders of the Slovak rebellion in 1848 were individuals who had been involved in promoting a homogeneous Slovak language and literary culture. The key figure among them was Ľudovít Štúr, who is credited with codifying the Slovak language as it is today. In frustration at his abortive efforts to galvanize the Slovak people into action against the Hungarians, Štúr complained, “How many, even among our youth, have as yet woken up!! At most a small number, scattered and spread about here and there, who don’t even know to which nation they should attach themselves, whom they should prepare to serve.”⁴⁰ Peter Brock notes that, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, “the small nationalist intelligentsia succeeded in maintaining itself . . . only with great difficulty. It was unable to prevent the increasing denationalization of the younger generation . . . and it exercised scarcely any influence among the peasant masses.”⁴¹ In her 1963 short story, “Ľapakovci,” Božena Slančíková-Ľimrává uses her tale of the Ľapak family as a thinly veiled parody of the Slovak people. The family lives in a small village, with siblings and their wives all squeezed into one cottage. The family resists any move by Ľ’la, the wife of the oldest brother, to build a new house or change the status quo in any way. It is from this story that I draw the telling quotation at the opening of this article, portraying an ingrained laziness and resigned contentment among the family members. Later in the story, Ľ’la bemoans the fact that her husband does not even come after her when she leaves the house and takes up a living as the servant of the local landlords in an attempt to shake him out of his complacency. Ľimrává writes, “[Ľ’la] knows what the Ľapaks are like — that they have to be pressured into everything, that they are as unshifting as a lead weight.”⁴² Echoes of Štúr’s real-life frustrations in 1848 resound in these lines.

Kirschbaum looks to the historic experience of Slovaks under Hungarian rule for an explanation of these character traits and of traditional Slovak attitudes toward authority.

The Magyar social and political system had inculcated in the population an attitude of deference toward authority and respect for social rank. As a personal mechanism for the preservation of language and national identity, this attitude was not an unsuccessful way of handling external pressure; as a collective pattern of behavior, however, it bred passivity, resignation, suspicion, and almost always also opposition.

The opposition, such as it would manifest itself, was never characterized by mass violence. Tatiana Repková, a prominent Slovak journalist, emphasizes that these Slovak characteristics, particularly the habit of obedience to strong leadership, are still prevalent in Slovak society.⁴³

Transnationalism of the Elites

By the turn of the century, while the masses seemed not yet to have extended their horizons beyond their local environs, the intelligentsia were seeking support in the wider realm of Central and Eastern Europe among other Slavic peoples. As already noted, the leading Slovak individuals in the mid-nineteenth century, notably Jan Kollár and Pavel Šafárik, were among a number of literary figures who took up the political banner. Their panslavic and particularly their pro-Czech orientation was reflected in their literary and linguistic, as well as in their political, endeavors. Both Kollár and Šafárik wrote in Czech and did not support the formation of a separate Slovak written language, partially owing to the range of dialects from which one would have to select. Rather, they sought to develop a Czechoslovak language accessible to both peoples. Although it took slightly longer for Czechoslovakism to become an accepted *political* doctrine among the intelligentsia, its cultural, linguistic roots were already apparent.

As I have outlined, it was essentially a handful of Slovak intellectuals who collaborated in the formation of the First Republic and of the post-World War Two Czechoslovak Republic. Even the founding of the “independent” Slovak state under Tiso was the affair of a small political group which, despite their exclusively Slovak nationalist agenda, did not appear to enjoy much popular support. It was still Czechoslovakism, however, that predominated among the intelligentsia. Many of them moved to or frequently visited Prague and strongly advocated the notion of brotherhood between the two peoples. That is not to say that they were ignorant of or unconcerned by the economic and political subordination of Slovaks within the state. They strove ever more vocally for greater rights of autonomy and even for a federal structure, but never suggested that full independence should be a goal. The increasing stress that many laid on the rights of Slovaks within the joint state culminated in the demands for federalization as a priority over democratization during the Prague Spring of 1968. This is further echoed in the poor level of support among the Slovak intelligentsia for Charter 77, a document that called for democratic rights but paid little attention to Slovak national concerns.

Yet even these leading figures who became more focused on Slovak national concerns after the Second World War often seemed to fall into resignation and passivity. Kirschbaum declares,

There were no organized political groups, but there were people who were patiently waiting for change: “The men, and, of course, also the women, of the year 1968 were certainly not organized as a movement, nor even half organized as the chartists, but they knew one another. . . . In contrast to the chartist dissidents, these Slovak reformers concentrated on their own country . . . they were prepared for changes, awaited them, and tried to be ready for them.”⁴⁴

This approach of passive patience might not seem unreasonable given the nature of the regime under which the society was living. However, it stands out in contrast with the activism both of the Czech chartists and of the Polish Solidarity movement.

Dušan Kováč wrote in 1991, “Historically, the entire Czech nation was prepared to accept the theory of Czechoslovakism. The Slovak nation [on the other hand] rejected this theory even if there were Slovak Czechoslovaks.”⁴⁵ Kováč overlooks an important point. For all that the Slovak Czechoslovaks of the elite may not have mirrored a similar pro-Czech orientation among the masses, it is not at all clear that the popular sentiment was one of animosity toward the Czechs and the joint state. It is noteworthy that most of those individuals elevated to the rank of hero in the modern Slovak consciousness

were, in fact, the Czechoslovaks that Kováč disparages. Štúr, the father of the Slovak literary language, was a proponent of panslavism and author of *Das Slawenthum und die Welt (Slavdom and the World)* in 1853. Kollár and Šafárik, as noted, were also panslavic in their political views and favored the development of an integrated Czechoslovak language. Štefaník, whose memory so many tried to undermine in the Slovak national consciousness, remains a legend passed down the generations and a central part of Slovak history for his role in forming the First Republic. Hlinka and Hodža, two further national heroes, signed the Martin Declaration of 1918 supporting Czechoslovak federation (although Hlinka's views were soon to change). Finally, and most significantly, there is Dubček. As Steiner points out,

The roles of the successive First Secretaries of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Dubček and Husák, in fact provide one of the many paradoxes of recent Czechoslovak political life. Both of them are Slovaks, but Dubček was always regarded more as a Communist than a Slovak. Husák, on the other hand, was always more of a Slovak than a Communist . . . Yet it was Dubček who came to appeal more to the national and political needs of Slovakia than the nationalist Husák.⁴⁶

It was Dubček who led the move toward political, democratic liberalization and Husák who pushed for federalization over, and ultimately at the expense of, democratization. Yet it is Dubček whose memory is venerated to this day.

Not only have the leading Slovak Czechoslovaks remained entrenched in the historical consciousness of the Slovak people, but many of them also became Czech heroes by dint of their dual role in forming the two joint republics. Hence these symbols of the Slovak national heritage do not clearly distinguish the Slovaks from the Czechs, but rather link them. The “imagined community” or “narrative of ‘identity’” which Benedict Anderson defines as the necessary foundation for a sense of brotherhood is not the exclusive property of the Slovaks, but joins them inextricably with the Czechs.⁴⁷

The one prominent Slovak figure who is exclusive to the Slovak experience before 1993 is Jozef Tiso. While Kirschbaum and Mikus defend his contribution to Slovak history and national development, the former acknowledges Liptak's observation that “Tiso was metamorphosed from the position of a real historical person into the function of a symbol.”⁴⁸ Regardless of Mikus's wishful interpretations, the fact is that this symbol remains at best ambiguous and at worst deeply negative in the minds of the majority of Slovak people. Forty years of Communist rule almost immediately following Tiso's fall, combined with worldwide condemnation of fascism, ensured that it was the uprising against the wartime regime that was, and is, more widely perceived as the great moment in Slovak history, not the achievement of independence under the aegis of that regime.

Provincialism of the Masses: Politics

While there have been increasingly wide-ranging views and aims among the growing cadre of Slovak politicians this century, it is fair to say that Czechoslovakism was the transnational goal that motivated many of the influential Slovak leaders, those glorified in the selective memory of the nation. However, as we have already seen, the horizons of the mass of the people were set at a somewhat different level from those of their leaders.

I have noted the lack of enthusiasm with which the independent Slovak state of 1939–1945 was received by the people. The Slovak uprising of 1944 gained far more popular support than the regime it rejected. Yet even this was almost entirely limited to

Central Slovakia and left large areas and some significant urban centers untouched. One is reminded again of Emerson's definition of the nation as "the largest community which, when the chips are down, effectively commands men's loyalty, overriding the claims both of lesser communities within it and those which cut across it or potentially enfold it within a still greater society."⁴⁹ Beyond the few for whom loyalty to the broader grouping of Czechoslovakia was the bottom line, the majority still seemed to find their loyalties limited to regions within Slovakia and to more local concerns than those of the nation.

The events of 1968 suggest for the first time a strong emphasis on national goals. The aims of Slovak leaders were divided: those in line with Dubček stressed liberalization and those in line with Husák demanded federalization as the priority. At the same time, a significant proportion of the Slovak people seems to have raised their attentions from local concerns to this nationalist agenda, actively falling in line with at least a proportion of the elite for the first time in Slovak history. Tatiana Repková recalls the unprecedented strength of feeling that reigned for a time among many members of her local community, reflecting both a wish for greater Slovak autonomy and broader political aims of liberalization. Yet this period of relative national unity appears in retrospect somewhat ephemeral.

The step of federalization opened the doors of government to many among the educated class who had taken up the protest against Pragocentrism. For them, the victory of 1969 was in winning access to jobs in the administration. As Donald Horowitz notes, "There is hardly an ethnically divided state without its 'civil service issue' . . . Differential visibility of various government bodies compounds perceptions of deprivation."⁵⁰ The events of 1968–1969 essentially satisfied that elite's sense of group entitlement, and they could furthermore reap the personal benefits that came with being part of a system characterized by corruption.

Horowitz's argument, however, that "derivative prestige" or "symbolic satisfaction" is felt by the whole ethnic group once its elite gains access to government, falls short of explaining the subsequent silence of the Slovak population. A proportion of the Slovak elite was indeed satisfied by the changes, dissolving the unity of voice they had briefly maintained with the Slovak people. Only those among the elite who had no interest in the reins of power were left frustrated. The mass of the Slovak people lost the political voice of its 1968 leadership, much of which now advocated the new status quo, and they simply returned in traditional manner to more provincial concerns. Repková explains this as a feeling of resignation among those who had battled for political freedoms and lost, and a subsequent return to passive obedience by those classes who had simply been carried along in the tide of their enthusiasm. Kusý goes further than this when he suggests that these events awakened a realization among Slovaks that the oppression they felt was not in fact national, but a facet of the political system.

Federation did indeed bring us the end of the "oppression" of the nation, in its narrow interpretation; yet federation . . . did not resolve anything so long as the bureaucratic machinations and the self-serving nature of the power elite, its privileges, its incompetency, etc., persisted . . . Federation, once it was digested by the nation, qualitatively changed the optics of the nation's sight: that which the nation had previously considered to be specifically national oppression it sees today as power-political oppression, because the latter now presents itself in its pure, unveiled form.⁵¹

Provincialism of the Masses: Territory

Kusý, as a Slovak who remained in Slovakia throughout this volatile period, reflects at length on the provincialism of the Slovak masses and challenges the notion that they form a cohesive nation. In an essay written in 1981, he cites a Slovak folk song extolling the unity of the Slovak people.

The populism of this kind of national consciousness has, I believe, never existed among us in the past, and still does not to this day. We are Ďetvanians, Magurians and Upper Hronians, Záhoriens. But a "Slovak race"? Only some enthused, nation-oriented intellectual, a follower of Štúr, driven by an idea that is foreign to the mentality of the Ďetvanian, could think up such a thing.⁵²

As evidence of this provincialism, Kusý notes the Slovak habit of classifying a person by his or her regional origins. He explains that he would avoid telling people that he was born in Bratislava, as the capital was not considered a place from which you came, but rather a place you transited for various unavoidable reasons. Instead, he would offer the birthplaces of his parents as possible categories. He was ultimately dubbed a native of Bobrovča, his father's birthplace, and adopted by the Bobrovčan "Mafia" among his colleagues and contacts.

This desire for regional pigeon-holing continues today and is prevalent among all classes of Slovak society. It is illustrated in the remark by parliamentary deputy Borovský regarding the candidacy of deputy chairman of Parliament, Huska, for the position of president. He told a reporter from the newspaper *SME*, "I personally value Mr. Huska for his wisdom and life experience, and I also admire him because he comes from the same region as I."⁵³ In an article for *The Slovak Spectator*, Viliam Schichman extrapolates the feeling of regional differentiation and superiority that lingers behind these words. He remarks that there are two classes of Slovaks, primary Slovaks and secondary Slovaks. "Primaries can be characterized as those living or coming from Central Slovakia, whose language was selected as the standard one, who see themselves as the 'backbone' of the nation . . . Secondary Slovaks, on the other hand, live [in] or come mostly from the fringes of the country."⁵⁴ Schichman conveys how this distinction is carried out in the political sphere.

The ruling and mostly "primary" [government] coalition appears to believe that they are an integral part of the nation with the right and obligation to enforce their will on the "conquered" fringe areas and eliminate the influence of those they call "non-Slovaks" (which does not always only mean Slovakia's ethnic Hungarians, incidentally, but often also "secondary Slovaks") . . . In contrast, the opposition — dominated by "secondary Slovaks," together with other ethnic minorities and a relatively small following of "primary Slovaks" — is trying to realize a different vision of the country, one based on principles of citizenship which would provide for much more inter-ethnic tolerance. This is clearly dictated by their own origins, instincts and experiences.⁵⁵

The sentiments to which Schichman refers are evident in an article released by a pro-government organization, Committee 98, which launched itself recently on the Internet as a movement in favor of a Central Slovak republic. By way of explanation, they write,

The Government Coalition is exposed daily to pressure from the opposition, which beats relentlessly on the drums of hatred of all that is Slovak. The nests of these evil-doers are towns which were never real Slovak bastions. Jews, Hungarians,

Germans, and other national groups were dominant in Bratislava and Košice for centuries. It is not surprising that the great sons of our nation did not come from Bratislava or Košice. Our proud forefathers came from the small villages of Central Slovakia.⁵⁶

These words represent an extremist version of a common viewpoint, and clearly illustrate the continuing regionalism within Slovakia that undermines a collective sense of nation.

Provincialism of the Masses: Language

Kusý turns next to the question of the Slovak language as a key symbol of the alleged unifying heritage of the Slovak people. I have already touched on the movement among some nineteenth-century Slovak intellectuals who wished to cultivate a joint Czechoslovak language rather than create a unified, codified form of Slovak. It was ultimately L'udovít Štúr, a political leader of the 1848 rebellion, who codified the version of Slovak that is accepted today. Kirschbaum notes, "The codification of the Slovak language presented a challenge not so much in terms of the exercise itself . . . but in the choice of dialects from which a literary language would be created." He identifies two main "language integration areas": Central Slovak and Western Slovak.⁵⁷ This ignores altogether the East Slovak dialects, which remain hard to understand, even today, for many Western and Central Slovaks.

Kirschbaum and others vehemently reject the notion of Slovak as a dialect of Czech, and rightly so. What is significant, though, is that the literary form of Czech has taken far deeper root among the Czech people than has literary Slovak in Slovakia. Indeed, as far as comprehension is concerned, Czech has become almost a second common language for Slovaks as well. After seventy years of joint statehood, both Czechs and Slovaks understand each other's formal language without difficulty. This leads to the ironic fact that Czech is easier to understand for many Slovaks than any of the still highly varied dialects of their own people.

On the one hand, then, there is a certain Czechoslovakism of language apparent in Slovakia even today, since Czech can be understood and read by virtually the whole population. On the other hand, when one turns to the spoken language, regional dialects remain the dominant factor. Kusý writes:

Our provincial character still reveals itself fully in our language. Literary Slovak is still, after almost a century and a half, overwhelmingly foreign to our people. It is a foreign language for them, which they have to learn just as they would have to learn Esperanto . . . The vast majority of our people don't learn it in their entire lives, even despite the heroic efforts of teachers in schools, despite "correctly speaking" politicians, despite newspapers, radio, and television, despite cinema and theater. Not only do they not learn it, they don't want to learn it either, and I would guess that they aren't able to do so. I do want to, and I sincerely struggle to do so, yet, now in my fifties, I am surprised to find that I still have not fully mastered its secrets.⁵⁸

Tatiana Repková tells of the time she was first interviewed on television. The initial reaction she received from a number of viewers was how impressed they were with her Slovak. They were used to the fact that being a native speaker did not mean that one would speak a literary, correct form of the language.

In this respect, the Slovak situation is not dissimilar to that in Germany, where re-

gional dialects are varied and may even be hard for some Germans to understand, but High German can be used as a common medium even by those who do not speak it as a matter of course. The difference lies in the proportion of the population who can adjust to this literary language form and the degree to which the population as a whole supports it as a part of their common culture and heritage. Kusý comments on the fact that literary Slovak commands little respect among Slovaks and remains a formal method of communication. "Anyone who wants to be 'of the people,' or 'national,' switches into dialect. And since dialect can only be provincial in nature (we basically have no slang), he or she becomes a provincial Slovak." Kusý extrapolates this further. "In the final analysis," he writes, "the dominance of provincial language over common language is in and of itself an expression, a reflection, of the dominance of provincial history over common history and, indeed, also of provincial, regional culture over common culture."⁵⁹

Provincialism of the Masses: Culture

Kusý reports a discussion with the Slovak art historian Tomáš Straus in which Straus pointed out the historical nonsense of trying to insert the concept of Slovak art into Slovak history, at least before the 1920s. Folk art was localized and was not adopted as national until this century. Even to this day, the ceramics of Modra are known by the name of that town, where they continue to be exclusively produced. The mountainous nature of the Slovak landscape doubtless helped to keep craft trades localized and isolated until transport became easier and could link remote, rural communities.

There is no doubt that there exists a range of folk art that could be termed "Slovak." In some of its manifestations — embroidery, wood carving, and so forth — it differs little from that produced in the Czech republic or Poland. However, it is considered by the people as representative of their folk culture as a whole. Slovak dances and folk songs are also considered to be part of a national Slovak culture. Folk tales retain their regional origins — often centered around the country's many castles — but have become a national currency. What is still lacking to this day are the artists, musicians, and writers who could represent a Slovak high culture.

It stands out to a foreigner living in Slovakia that even on closer inspection there are no cultural figures of world standing who might project an image of Slovakia — or even an awareness of Slovakia — into the international arena. There is no equivalent of the Czech composers Smetana and Dvořák, no writer with the stature of Kundera and Havel. As the anthropologist Clifford Geertz points out, national identity is not just about self-perception, but also about a sense of worth gained through the perceptions of others. "One aim is to be noticed: it is a search for an identity, and a demand that the identity be publicly acknowledged as having import, a social assertion of the self as being 'somebody in the world.'"⁶⁰ Tatiana Repková notes her own experiences in searching for some Slovak souvenirs to give to friends in the United States that would convey an image of Slovakia. She found herself limited to artifacts that reflected only a peasant lifestyle, such as figures made from corn husks, or products that were of a generic type, often not even made in Slovakia. The only alternative was a compact disc, published overseas, of two Slovak opera singers. "The irony," she observes, "is that these artists are hardly acknowledged by the Slovak public as Slovak national artists."

In a world where the Slovaks have always been politically obscured behind or within the name of another state, they sorely lack the kind of recognizable representatives of high culture that could project their identity in the world and raise international

awareness of their existence as a nation. Ironically, the quiet and bloodless nature of Slovakia's split from the Czech lands in 1993, while highly desirable as a mode of secession, compounded this problem of obscurity in the international arena. If Slovakia is gaining a higher profile within Europe it is for the notoriety of the Mečiar government, not for any positive image of cultural achievement, nor for her undeniable economic successes.

Provincialism of the Masses: Religion

Catholicism is an important part of the life of the majority of Slovaks. It has perhaps been the most salient point of distinction between the Czechs and the Slovaks. While many Czechs adopted Protestantism via the medieval Hussite movement, adherence to a religious faith ceased to be a nationwide characteristic in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Mikus states disparagingly, "Humanism, divorced from the supernatural element, has become the national philosophy of the Czech bourgeoisie. The worship of liberty of thought and action, of the principle of spiritual and moral autonomy, of man as the highest criterion of life, represent the very quintessence of the philosophy of Masaryk and Beneš."⁶¹ Kusý is quick to note, in justification, that the Slovaks never experienced the religious ups and downs to which the Czechs were subjected by the Hussite revolutionary movement, the events of White Mountain, and the subsequent forced recatholicization, which he sees as the cause of the Czechs' "lukewarm" approach to religion.

For the Slovak leaders of the nineteenth century, religion did take on nationalist overtones. Those who advocated a Czechoslovak language and even political cooperation were largely Lutherans in the Czech tradition. When the Czech Hussite clergy went to Slovakia in the fourteenth century, they took with them Bibles translated into Czech. This written form of biblical Czech adopted, over time, some Slovakisms. A number of Lutherans in the eighteenth century strove to have this evolved biblical Czech formalized through study. Indeed, a chair of Czechoslovak language was created at Protestant schools in Bratislava and the mining center Banská Štiavnica.

It was shortly after the founding of the First Republic that Catholic Slovak leaders such as Hlinka began to speak of religious discrimination from Prague. Those Slovaks selected for government were overwhelmingly Lutherans. Kirschbaum writes that "of the fifty-four representatives that Slovakia was allotted [on the Revolutionary National Assembly in late 1918] . . . there were thirteen Czechs, thirty-one Slovak Lutherans, and ten Slovak Catholics," despite the fact that more than 75 percent of the population was Roman or Greek Catholic.⁶² It was Hlinka who later formed the Slovak People's Party from which Tiso's wartime regime emerged. The nationalist rhetoric of this party often referred to the Czechs as irreligious and tried to appeal to the Catholicism of the Slovaks.

Despite these perceptions that Slovak Catholics were historically persecuted on religious grounds, Kusý marks the beginning of concerted religious discrimination in the postwar era, under communism. He concludes that it was far more widely practiced against Slovaks than Czechs "both because it was [the administration's] task to purge the ideology and the representatives of the Slovak State . . . and because religion was a dominant factor, and, as such, the most significant ideological opponent."⁶³ Kusý remarks that religious repression of the Slovaks as a nation was the one issue that was not alleviated with the federalization of the Czechoslovak state in 1969. Slovaks undertook annual pilgrimages to holy sites in Levoča and Šaštín throughout the 1980s in a show of

resistance to repression. And in 1988, 300,000 of the 500,000 signatures on a Czechoslovak petition calling for greater religious freedoms were Slovak.

Religion would appear, then, to be the aspect of Slovak life that has most consistently united the population over time. This is not to say, however, that Catholicism was seen by the nation as a group characteristic. While this is certainly true of the Poles, Repková remarks that the Slovaks saw the Poles as *too* religious and were struck by the central role that the church played in their everyday lives. Kirschbaum claims that the pilgrimages of the 1980s were in fact nationalist displays. "By their very nature of bringing people together of all ages and from all parts of Slovakia, these pilgrimages also became nationalist demonstrations."⁶⁴ For all that this may be an apparent truth to the outside observer, the question remains as to whether the people themselves saw their adherence to religion in a nationalist light. The evidence does not suggest that this was the case. Indeed, there seems to have been a clear separation in the people's minds between religion and the Slovak nation.

Repková notes that those in politics who spoke the rhetoric of nationalism were, by and large, not themselves religious, and when they tried to use religion for nationalist purposes, it was with little effect. Kirschbaum relates a story from 1989 of how the communist regime tried to link Catholicism and nationalism to the detriment of both through a television series called *The Cross in the Shackles of Power*. The aim of the program was to suggest that the Catholic church had been responsible for the evils of wartime Slovakia and also of the twenty years before that. This and similar attempts to link symbols in the national consciousness appear to have failed: the people refused to reject Catholicism as part and parcel of the condemned wartime state.

Efforts to use religion for political purposes continue today. When Pope John Paul II visited Slovakia in 1997, Prime Minister Mečiar decreed that the visit should not be used for political ends. But posters featuring row upon row of Mečiar's face alternating with that of the pope went up overnight around the country. Yet the espousal of religion by political figures has seemed on this and other occasions to carry little weight with the population. For all that religious sentiment has historically been stronger among Slovaks than Czechs, it does not seem to have been reduced in the minds of the population to a specifically national issue, as it was by the Poles to their north. In short, it was not, and is not, a defining characteristic in the nation's self-perception.

The Growth of Group Identity

A Negative Identity?

One should not ignore the fact that there was an undeniable increase in national consciousness during the life of the two Czechoslovak states. We have seen how the Slovak population and elites came closer together in their thinking and activism in the events of 1968 than ever before. Was this new sense of common cause the result of a united feeling among Slovaks of who they were or simply an awareness of who they were not? As I noted earlier, Walker Connor draws this distinction between an ethnic group and a nation according to whether a group's identity is a form of positive self-definition or of negative rejection of foreign identities. Connor explicitly remarks on the negative nature of Slovak national identity under the Hapsburg Empire. "The Slovaks, Croats, and Slovenes . . . were aware that they were neither German nor Magyar, long before they possessed positive opinions concerning their ethnic or national identity."⁶⁵

I would argue that in the case of the Slovaks, this negative identity persisted under the Czechoslovak state. Once disillusionment set in — for the elites through their lack of political rights and for the masses in the economic stagnation and poor standard of living — the sense of resentment of Czech, or Czechoslovak dominance fueled a feeling of Slovak identity in contrast to Czech identity. The ease with which so many among the elite were co-opted into the regime and its corrupt ways, ways that did not fulfill the professed religious or economic aims of the Slovak masses, suggests that their nationalist rhetoric had lacked positive, self-defining content and was motivated by more self-interested concerns. The speed with which the population as a whole returned to its quiet resignation and provincialism suggests that the binding effects of common resentment of the Czechs were a cohesive force only so long as that resentment was fanned by the politicians.

Judy Batt sums up this continuing negative identity of the Slovak people, which has been exacerbated by the inflammatory politics of the Mešiar government.

The picture which emerges of the Slovaks after the collapse of communism is . . . one of a nation longing to be recognised in its own right, whose identity had largely become defined in opposition to the stronger, culturally more sophisticated and self-confident Czechs and Hungarians, and which was correspondingly marked by an inferiority complex and hypersensitivity to any insinuation about its “backwardness.” But it was a nation with rather incoherent, only part-formed or deeply divided orientations to politics, statehood and the substantive historical content of its identity.⁶⁶

An Alternative Czechoslovak Identity

In the end, the proponents of Czechoslovakism comprise the group that seems to have had the most positive sense of self-definition. For all that the Czech and Slovak languages were never united, they are entirely mutually comprehensible, and the Slovak members of this cadre were those who, if anyone, truly claimed literary Slovak as their mother tongue. Their view of history was homogeneous and internally consistent: the victories of Czechoslovakism were relatively unambiguous; the Slovak wartime state was an aberration; and the Slovak National Uprising was a symbol of the desire for unification as well as a rejection of fascism. The heroes of Czechs and Slovaks were the same, mutual symbols of their common history. The Czechoslovak state was democratic in its first incarnation, and its people struggled for democracy twice in its second incarnation, finally triumphing in 1989. This was a story that one could pass on with pride to one's children and grandchildren.

Emil Komárik, a Slovak writer, summed up the power of this Czechoslovak group, or nation, in a December 1990 article.

I cannot escape the feeling that on the territory of the [Czecho-Slovak Federal Republic] there are three nations: Czech, Slovak, and federal. In the republic, the Czech and Slovak nations are more or less tolerated, but the creator, owner and ruler is the federal nation. In numbers, the federal nation is not very big, lives just about entirely in Prague but owns 70 percent of the state's property, has all the executive powers and has all the laws on its side. It is a nation with only one layer but it is a layer of rulers . . . If there is any sort of nationalism which is truly capable of breaking up the republic, it is federal nationalism.⁶⁷

1989–1993: Explaining the Dissolution

And so I turn to the final breakup of Czechoslovakia. Was Komárik's prediction true? When the federal republic finally split in 1993, was it because the unacceptable dominance of the federalists defeated their own cause? Or was this the final maturation of Slovak nationalism, the blooming of political, national consciousness? And why did the dissolution come about so peacefully? Did this stem from a political maturity; from an underlying sense of shared experience that made hostility unacceptable; from fear of the consequences of violence seen in the Yugoslav experience; or from something else entirely?

The revolutionary thinkers and leaders of 1848 had been the literati of their time. As Kirschbaum writes,

The “Štúrovci” had been writers, poets, and social workers as well as political leaders; their successors would be no less. This combination of culture and politics, the need to define and elevate the Slovak core as well as ensure its survival, meant that Slovak nationalism avoided the extreme manifestations that . . . became the by-product of its development elsewhere in Eastern Europe.⁶⁸

There is perhaps some truth in the observation that cultural figures may be less inclined to violent protest than politicians of a different background. What is also true is that there was but a handful of individuals among the Slovak population in 1848 who were prepared to translate the rhetoric of the leaders into action: the message did not strike a chord among the Slovak nation, or, at least, did not seem to them worth fighting for.

In 1989, the issue at stake was once again democracy and not nationalism. As in 1848, Slovak artists and writers were prominent among the political forces that emerged in Slovakia as communism crumbled. This time they were recognized as representative voices by the now greatly increased proportion of students, professionals, and others who filled the streets. As their nineteenth-century predecessors had been panslavists seeking democratic rights under the Hungarians, so they were mostly Czechoslovakists seeking democratic rights and freedom from Soviet-led rule.

The 1992–1993 case is different. The artists and literati were never a part of the push for independence from the Czechs; indeed many, if not most, opposed it. This, like the creation of the wartime state, was a matter decided between a few politicians. Granted, there was no vassal status to the new Slovakia that was created; but, equally, there was no plebiscite, no referendum, no voice for the people in the formation of this new state. It was handled by a political elite and engineered by the two prime ministers, Vaclav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar. To an extent, Komárik might have been right in foreseeing that Czechoslovakism would break up the federation, since the core dispute between Mečiar and Klaus was the degree of autonomy to be granted to the Slovaks and the rejection of what the Slovak government and others perceived as a history of Prago-centrism. While the Czech government wanted to continue with a federation of the two nations, its Slovak counterpart now sought a confederal arrangement, including separate international representation.

However, throughout the negotiations, full independence remained the last option. “No one really knew how viable an option it was and whether it truly enjoyed popular support.”⁶⁹ In 1991, a public opinion poll in the newspaper *Smena* asked that respondents state their preference among five options: a unitary state, a federal state, a union of associated republics, confederation, and independence. Forty-two percent of Czechs

voted for a unitary state and 28 percent for a federal state. While only 11 percent of Slovaks voted for a unitary state, 34 percent voted for a federal state and 23 percent for a confederal state. Significantly, a mere 16 percent of Slovaks voted for independence.⁷⁰ Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that had there been a referendum at the time of the separation of the two states, a majority of both Czechs and Slovaks would have voted against it.

The final split between the two states, agreed between the two premiers on August 26, 1992, and enacted on January 4, 1993, cannot objectively be considered to be the final fruition of Slovak nationalist aims. It represented the allegedly nationalist aims of a political group, of a government comprised of an ambitious premier at the head of the HZDS party and its coalition partner, the Slovak National Party. There was certainly some support among the people, but it was that of a minority and came mostly from the business community. Repková notes that the final decision for independence was driven by the issue of privatization. Once Slovak politicians and businessmen realized that they stood a much greater chance of getting hold of state assets within an independent Slovakia than in competition with Czechs within a joint state, their personal interests drove the process of secession. Once again, a major change in Slovakia's political status had been engineered by a few leaders who stood to gain personally, leaders who professed nationalist motivations yet neither sought, nor paid heed to, the views and will of the nation.

As so often before, the nation accepted the new system as a *fait accompli*. A few were pleased, most of those who weren't adapted to it in resignation, and the remainder immigrated to the Czech republic, Austria, or farther afield. Arguments about the excessive Pragocentrism of the previous federal system were of little significance to most Slovaks for whom even Bratislava remains a distant and alien culture. The latest government of Vladimír Mečiar, which has been in power since November 1994, has centralized the Slovak administration in the hands of the government to an extent considerably beyond that of the years 1990–1993. Once again, the only concerted voices of protest, apart from the opposition parties, have been the artists, writers, and leaders of the new nongovernmental organizations. They are the only ones to have publicly demonstrated against erosions of democracy.

Tatiana Repková believes that nothing has changed in the Slovak mentality. "The Slovaks remain, at root, a peasant people," she says. "They are concerned with their everyday lives in their regions, and little more. They are, by nature, an obedient people who remain most content under the guidance of a strong leader." She puts her own very different attitudes down to her childhood. Her mother worked for the Bata shoe company, which was renowned for its capitalist methods and focus on human resource development. She grew up with this Western culture of self-awareness and self-reliance, which deeply influenced her and left her frustrated by the characteristic resignation and passivity she observed around her. Like others in her position, she finally resolved that there was no other option but to leave Slovakia for the time being, a decision she did not take lightly.

Ted Gurr, in his assessment of the factors that make ethnic violence a likely outcome of tensions between groups, stresses the roles of group identity and a common sense of grievance. "Grievances about differential treatment and the sense of group cultural identity provide the essential bases for mobilization and shape the kinds of claims made by the group's leaders. If people's grievances and group identity are both weak, there is little chance that they can be mobilized by any political entrepreneurs in response to

any external threat or opportunity.”⁷¹ There is no doubt that the Slovaks’ sense of group identity and common grievance increased over the life of the two Czechoslovak republics. Yet when the new federal arrangement of 1969, imposed from without, gave many of the nationalist voices a stake in government and left the rest of the nation with a continuation of the status quo ante, the Slovak nation once again became, in Kusý’s words, “self-absorbed.” If one accepts the argument that the uprising of 1944 cannot rightly be classified as a national movement, either in the geographical extent of the population involved or in the nature of the motivations at play, there appears to have been no instance in Slovak history when leaders have successfully galvanized group identity and grievances behind a common, national cause. There is no doubt that the leaders have been there. It is the strength and extent of national and nationalist sentiment that have been lacking.

Gurr also concludes from his study of ethnic groups that “the common denominator of almost all autonomy demands is the historical fact or belief that the group once governed its own affairs.”⁷² In order to make allowance for the Slovak experience, this statement should perhaps reflect a requirement that the collective memory of this independence be a positive, happy one. Slovak calls for greater autonomy, as espoused by the wider population in 1968, may have been promoted by the historical experience of statehood or may have been independent of it. What is significant is that this call for autonomy was not a call for independence in 1968 nor was it a call for independence in 1992. The Slovak collective memory of the wartime experience is a necessary part of any explanation of this fact, as is the continuing provincialism and passivism of the Slovak national character.

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It is clear that the smooth separation of the Czechs and Slovaks in 1992–1993 was not the result of clever political management of virulent nationalist sentiment but the repetition of a pattern in Slovak history: a political elite made a decision based on its nationalist agenda without reference to the people, and the majority of the nation was in turn ready to accept the formula presented to them and focus on their local concerns. The debate on separation within Slovakia, perhaps greater than ever before, was witness to the growth of politically conscious sectors in Slovak society. The irony is that these politically conscious groups — students, intelligentsia, professionals — were the most dubious about the prospect of independence, while support for the nationalist agenda of Mečiar’s HZDS and the National Party was thickest in the rural communities of Slovakia.

Strong leadership was once again the panacea that the worker and peasant communities desired, but this time they found it among their own number. On doing so, their response was once again passive obedience, even after Mečiar’s democratic credentials began to be called into question. As Pavol Šliač, a priest in Central Slovakia, wrote in an article for *The Slovak Spectator*, “Slovakia’s leader is a charismatic, talented man who is deeply sensitive to the profound but capricious moods of the masses, and who is able to satisfy their yearning for a father figure of divine stature.”⁷³

It is the nationalist rhetoric of Mečiar’s government that has continued to convince the outside world that Slovakia’s bid for independence can be equated with that of the Balkan and Baltic states. The new Slovakia has developed an image of rife nationalism and repression of its Hungarian minority. The reality is that this is the rhetoric of a few

leaders who have found a niche in certain sections of society for a negative definition of Slovak national identity. While Slovaks along the Hungarian and Czech borders live in relative harmony with their Hungarian and Czech neighbors, the politicians appeal to constituents far from these regions with their often xenophobic pronouncements of Slovak distinctiveness and superiority. The irony is that these views have gained prominence as a political platform largely *after* Slovak independence.

So I return to the path that Walker Connor traces from ethnic group to nation. If an ethnic group's sense of identity is defined more by a sense of solidarity when faced with a foreign element than by a common sense of self, then the nationalism of Mečiar and his followers would indeed appear to be more akin to xenophobia. Yet even this "represents a step in the process of nation-formation, it testifies that a group of people must know ethnically what they *are not* before they know what they *are*."⁷⁴ Slovak nationalism may not form an easy model for other nations seeking independence, but neither is it a mere mirage.

The reality is that what could grow to be a benign nationalism in Slovakia, a positive, self-defined sense of common identity, is being built by those who largely reject the government's rhetoric, often criticize it, and are labeled bad Slovaks and traitors by that same regime. As Judy Batt notes, the parties in opposition to Mečiar are not "less interested than those of the Mečiar camp in promoting Slovak identity, but rather they are committed to finding a definition of Slovak identity that can be compatible with the ideal of modern European statehood, and can thus be realized in harmony with 'European norms,' rather than challenging them."⁷⁵ The tragedy for Slovakia will be if this, its second experience of independence, should turn out as tarnished as the first so that the Slovak nation misses this historic opportunity of proving that Slovakia can have full autonomy and true democracy at one and the same time and create a proud and unified legacy for future generations.

Epilogue

Slovakia held its second national elections since independence in September 1998. Mečiar's HZDS party won the largest proportion of the vote by a narrow margin, 27 percent, barely beating the Slovak Democratic Coalition vote of 26.33 percent. The key coalition partner of HZDS, the Slovak National Party, gained just 9.07 percent, and the Union of Slovak Workers (ZRS) fell well below the 5 percent minimum with just 1.2 percent.

The Party of the Democratic Left, which garnered 14.66 percent, soon confirmed its preelection pledge not to join a coalition with HZDS and SNS, making it impossible for Mečiar to form a government. Although he persisted in his efforts to forge a coalition up until the October deadline, all that the incumbents could achieve before leaving the seat of power was to introduce some last-minute controversial measures, such as dispatching various cronies as ambassadors to unfilled posts and privatizing parts of state-owned companies to undeclared individuals.

On October 29, the opposition parties — Slovak Democratic Coalition, Party of the Democratic Left, Slovak Hungarian Coalition, and Party of Civic Understanding — signed a coalition agreement. Together they hold 93 of the 150 seats in Parliament, a constitutional majority. Given the democratic credentials of these parties while in opposition, all would at first sight seem well. But a number of possible pitfalls lie on the route ahead.

Some of the parties and individuals that comprise the new government have less than perfect records themselves. There are many reports of cronyism in the privatization undertaken by the ill-fated "interim government" of March to September 1994, of which some of them were members. There has been much talk of reviewing and resubmitting some of the privatization undertaken by the Mečiar government, which will risk deep disruption in the economy and cause a rift between government and industry that the former can ill afford. *The Slovak Spectator* has already warned against a perceived tendency among some in the new government to give access to compliant journalists and to condemn those who report on them critically.

A further danger is that the coalition will crack under the strain of political differences. Even when in opposition, these parties seemed almost incapable of acting in concert on important and fundamental issues. When they were in complete agreement on the need to move to direct elections for the presidency, rather than the present parliamentary vote, they were so focused on a difference of opinion in the detail that they submitted two separate bills to Parliament and lost any chance of carrying the vote. Should such divisions again dominate policymaking, these parties will soon find themselves stymied as a government and increasingly discredited. This would make all the more likely a premature return to the polls, bringing with it a strong possibility of a swing of votes back to the strong, yet less democratic, leadership we have seen since 1994.

The challenge to the new government remains that which I identified in the body of this article: to prove that autonomy and democracy can be made to work in combination in Slovakia and can win the confidence of the population. Although prospects look rosier than when I wrote this piece, the jury is still out, and the final verdict should not be expected for some time. ❀

The views I expressed in this article should in no way be taken as the views of the British Foreign Office.

Notes

1. There were other significant minorities within Czechoslovakia, most notably the Hungarians, Germans, Romany, and Ruthenians. However, I will limit myself to an examination of the situation of the Slovaks, who were always seen by the Czechs, the indigenous majority, as constituting a more significant ethnic group within the state than the other nationalities.
2. Anthony D Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 7–13.
3. Mikus was Slovakia's chargé d'affaires to Madrid during its period of independence under Nazi tutelage in the Second World War. After the collapse of this state in 1945, he was imprisoned by the Communists, escaped to Paris in 1948, and later immigrated to the United States.
4. Joseph A Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1977), 139.
5. *Ibid.*, 27.
6. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 108. Kirschbaum was born in Slovakia but immigrated to Canada with his parents when he was just three months old. A professor of political science and coordinator of the International Studies Programme at York University, Toronto, he has written numerous books and articles on Slovak and East European politics. His father, Jozef Kirschbaum, a close ally of President Jozef Tiso, was

- involved in the fascist government that Tiso led during the war years. As secretary-general of the Slovak People's Party, the government party, Jozef Kirschbaum was forced to resign when the hard-line Vojtech Tuka became prime minister. Kirschbaum then served as Slovak chargé d'affaires in Bern. After the abortive Slovak uprising of 1944, he tried to establish contact with the Allies to explore the possibility of Slovakia's retaining independence after the end of the war. He was referred to Edvard Beneš's government-in-exile, which had already received official recognition as the representative administration of both Czechs and Slovaks.
7. Miroslav Kusý, *Eseje*, trans. Caroline Barker (Bratislava: Archa, 1991), 166. Miroslav Kusý, head of the ideological department of the Communist Party during the Prague Spring of 1968, was dismissed from this position when the Soviets ended this period of liberalization on the basis of democratic views that he had expressed in the Slovak media. He continues to live in Slovakia, working as a writer.
 8. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 27.
 9. Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 102–103.
 10. Kusý, *Eseje*, 231.
 11. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 113.
 12. *Ibid.*, 119.
 13. Kusý, *Eseje*, 64.
 14. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 122.
 15. A. J. P. Taylor, cited in *ibid.*, 121.
 16. Kusý, *Eseje*, 66.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. *Ibid.*, 67.
 19. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 186.
 20. *Ibid.*, 196.
 21. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 44.
 22. Kusý, *Eseje*, 163. The "alternative of the Protectorate" is the path down which the Czech lands had been carried following Nazi occupation. The Czechs were subjected to a regime imposed by the German occupying force, in contrast with the *voluntary* cooperation of the Slovak puppet regime under Tiso.
 23. FO 471/39, Doc. C3973/19/18, March 20, 1939, cited in Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 190.
 24. MAE, 132, 13–15, cited in *ibid.*, 191.
 25. Eugen Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 66.
 26. *Ibid.*, 75.
 27. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 208.
 28. Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 92.
 29. Kusý, *Eseje*, 67–70.
 30. *Ibid.*, 70.
 31. *Ibid.*, 71.
 32. The Košice Program is the name given to the agreement negotiated between Czech and Slovak opposition leaders at the end of the Second World War regarding the new Czechoslovak governing arrangements. It was made public in Košice, East Slovakia, in 1945. The compromise, proposed by Slovak Communist Party leader Klement Gottwald, held that the Slovaks should give up their aim of a federal arrangement in return for recognition of the Slovak National Council, a legislative body established during the war by the Democratic and Communist parties, which aimed to hold power after the war until Slovakia's place in a new Czechoslovak republic was secured.
 33. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 229.
 34. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 56.
 35. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 242.
 36. Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, 176.
 37. Kusý, *Eseje*, 167.
 38. *Ibid.*, 169.
 39. Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise of Self-assertion of Asian and*

- African Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 95–96, cited in Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 107.
40. Cited in Kusý, *Eseje*, 160.
 41. Cited in Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 145.
 42. Božena Slanciková-Timrává, "Tapakovci," *Tapakovci a Iné Poviedky*, trans. Caroline Barker (Bratislava: Mladé leta, 1963), 189.
 43. Tatiana Repková entered the field of journalism in 1987 and rose to be editor in chief of the economic paper *Trend* and subsequently editor in chief of the daily newspaper *Národná Obroda*. In 1997 she encountered severe problems with government interference in the newspaper's activities and ultimately resigned. Shortly afterward she left Slovakia to take up a fellowship award at Harvard University, where she is pursuing research interests. The comments accredited to her in this article are drawn from a series of interviews and correspondence conducted between February and April 1998.
 44. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 248, citing Vladimír Minác, "Návraty k Prevratu" ("Return to the Revolution").
 45. Dušan Kováč, "Korene Neporozumenia," *Nove Slovo*, January 31, 1991, cited in Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 260.
 46. Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, 5.
 47. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).
 48. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 222.
 49. Emerson, *From Empire to Nation*.
 50. Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 224.
 51. Kusý, *Eseje*, 173.
 52. *Ibid.*, 59.
 53. SME [http://www.sme.sk/aarticle.asp?dat=264&id=39612], March 30, 1998, trans. Caroline Barker.
 54. Viliam Schichman, "Two Types of Slovaks Divide Country," *Slovak Spectator*, December 18, 1997–January 14, 1998. Schichman is the director of English Services, a teaching, translation, and interpreting company in Prešov, East Slovakia.
 55. *Ibid.*
 56. [http://internet.sk/sme-1/prevolanie.html], April 20, 1998, trans. Caroline Barker.
 57. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 91.
 58. Kusý, *Eseje*, 60.
 59. *Ibid.*, 62–63.
 60. Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, cited in Judy Batt, *The New Slovakia: National Identity, Political Integration and the Return to Europe* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996), 1.
 61. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 149.
 62. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 161.
 63. Kusý, *Eseje*, 171.
 64. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 248.
 65. Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 103.
 66. Batt, *The New Slovakia*, 10.
 67. Emil Komárik, "Federalné Tahanice," *Slovenský Denník*, 180/1990, cited in Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 262–263.
 68. *Ibid.*, 139.
 69. *Ibid.*, 265.
 70. *Smena*, August 28, 1991, cited in *ibid.*, 268.
 71. Ted Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), 124.
 72. *Ibid.*, 76.
 73. Pavol Zidek, "A Priest Analyzes Meciar, His Fellow Christians," *Slovak Spectator*, November 20–December 3, 1997.
 74. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, 103.
 75. Batt, *The New Slovakia*, 17.

Africa



Kenya